



Portland Press Herald / Maine Sunday Telegram KENNEBEC JOURNAL Morning Sentinel

Member Center

Home News Sports Business A&E Travel Outdoors [MaineJobs](#) [Real Estate](#) [Wheels](#) [Marketplace](#) myMaineToday.com

Portland Press Herald EST. 1862 Maine Sunday Telegram

Home News Sports Business Editorials Nemitz iHerald Obituaries Classifieds Place an Ad Home Delivery Reader Services

THE ANNUAL: ART AMONG THE OAKS

Portland Press Herald / Maine Sunday Telegram

September 7, 1997
CITY, AUDIENCE, page 1E

[E-mail a letter to the editor](#)
[printer-friendly version](#)

The Forest City Annual is back for a second year, this time in Deering Oaks. It has improved quite a bit.

For one thing, it is no longer on Congress Street, which is as awful a place to show sculpture as can be imagined. Deering Oaks is a great place. For another, it has given up that specious idea that a show should be defined by a material. This time, the pieces all relate in some way to the park and trees but aren't all made from wood. The artists who made pieces for the park are Mary Anderson, John BonSignore, James Calderwood, Beth Galston, Lucy Hodgson, Douglas Kornfeld, Lin Lisberger, Sam Shaw, Steven Siegel and Leslie Wilcox. The organization Spiral Arts has also done some projects for the event.

One the whole, the show is a pretty good cross-section of the kinds of sculpture one finds in big group shows these days. It is, perhaps, a bit didactic, but these are didactic times. With all the supporting councils and advisory panels that shows like this require, things need to be good for you in ways that can be defined by a committee in order to make the cut.

That doesn't mean they can't be interesting.

Mary Anderson has quoted from T.S. Eliot and Emily Dickinson. Lines from two poems are engraved on plaques that are fixed to park benches. One reads one walking in one direction on State Street, and the other going the opposite way. The abstracted language of the poetry is given real visual dimension by the experience of the park itself, and by the reader's passage from one side of the park to another.

Douglas Kornfeld has made a big semiotic field out of a tree and signs of trees. Familiar contexts are twisted out of place. He has placed 48 highway diamond caution signs in a grid that covers most of the area under a giant oak. The signs each bear identical stylized images of a tree. It is a play on how we define an area as special, impressing the cultural context of civil engineering onto the space defined by the tree.

Lucy Hodgson and John BonSignore have made works that are infused with nature itself rather than about nature. Both have a trace of the figure that arrives almost built into the materials they use. Hodgson's work uses big gnarled logs with the bark stripped off and carved and trimmed a bit. They are a little like dancers even they are presented pretty much the way they grew.

BonSignore's work is made from stones threaded over a metal pipe that holds them in an unnatural vertical stack. Shape and profile are produced by the unmodulated surface of the boulders. They look as if a New England stone wall decided to get up and dance.

Lin Lisberger has put her work high up in a tree. As has much of her work in the recent past, the piece is made from sticks that are shaped like ribs. The imagery comes from the natural visual affinity between sticks of wood and a bones. Strapped high on an oak, the collection of bits seems like the remains of some presence that once occupied the tree.

Beth Galston's pieces are made from painted branches set on the ground in a relationship to tree trunks. Some are partly buried. Together, they form a mental map of the hidden part of the tree, the root system that lives out of sight underground. The whole work is a meditation on the seen and unseen, about the parts of nature that are outside normal perception.

James Calderwood has made a house-shaped cage with an easy chair inside it, an image as unobtrusive as a stubbed toe. One can consider its literal ideas about domestic entrapment, but the implied social commentary is a bit subverted by the park squirrels that have taken to the chair stuffing.

Sam Shaw has made a number of floating sculptures that are moored in the duck pond. They have suffered from some technical problems. It was a good attempt at using the pond, with its slow feeling of change and reflected light, but this time around it hasn't quite worked out.

Leslie Wilcox has "dressed" a few of the trees in "coats" made from screening. It is as if the trees were wrapped in a diaphanous dressing gown. It is a kind of spirit anthropomorphism, giving the trees a costume that helps us identify with them as living things.

Steven Siegel's work is a mound made from old copies of this very newspaper, stacked vertically on a low berm of earth. Over time and rain, the papers have begun to fuse into cellulose mass, with enough print left to tell what they are. The shape and texture changes as the papers weather.

Of all the works, this one has the most literal, didactic message: Things change. Trees become paper. Take care of the environment. Be a good person. It made me feel like giving up recycling.

This show still feels like it was made by a committee, both in planning and selection. Still, it is big leap from last year's, because it's in the park and not on the street, and one can actually consider the work in peace. And there is some pretty interesting work. There was last year, too, but no one could see it.

Organics first!

Sounds like you've already called **Keystone Horticulturists**.

Yup, I'm way ahead of you. They'll be here tomorrow.

KEYSTONE HORTICULTURISTS

Full Horticultural Services for your Lawn, Plants, Shrubs and Trees. Thoughtful Landscape Design and Installation.

Portland 797-8733
Kennebunk 985-8873

MaineToday.com Table of Contents

- News:** [Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram](#) [Kennebec Journal](#) [Morning Sentinel](#) [Community Leader](#) [Coastal Journal](#) [Updates](#) [AP Wire](#) [Weather](#)
- Sports:** [High School Sports](#) [Sea Dogs](#) [Boston Red Sox](#) [Patriots](#)
- Business:** [Blogs](#) [Small Business 101](#) [News](#) [Features](#) [Calendar](#) [Resources](#) [Business Classifieds](#)
- Arts & Entertainment:** [Calendar](#) [Movies](#) [Music](#) [Dining](#)
- Travel:** [Maine Regions](#) [Things to Do](#) [Maine Guide](#) [From Away](#) [Vacation Rentals](#) [Lodging Guide](#) [Campgrounds](#)
- Outdoors:** [Biking](#) [Camping](#) [Fishing](#) [Hiking](#) [Hunting](#) [Nature Watching](#) [Outdoors with Children](#)
- Other sections:** [Blogs](#) [Pets](#) [Kids & Family](#) [Personals](#)
- Classifieds:** [MaineJobs](#) [Real Estate](#) [Wheels](#) [Marketplace](#) [Celebrations](#) [Place an ad](#)
- Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram:** [News](#) [Sports](#) [Business](#) [Editorials](#) [Nemitz](#) [iHerald](#) [Obituaries](#) [Special Reports](#) [Reader Services](#)
- Kennebec Journal:** [News](#) [Sports](#) [Obituaries](#) [Viewpoints](#) [Reader Services](#)

[Morning Sentinel](#): [News](#) [Sports](#) [Obituaries](#) [Viewpoints](#) [Reader Services](#)

[Advertising](#): [Advertising products](#) [Audience](#) [Content areas](#) [Service](#) [Contact us](#)

[Questions/Comments?](#)

Copyright © 2006, Blethen Maine Newspapers, Inc.